SUMMER DAYS IN THE AMERICAN SECTORS

There is such a thing as being tired: there is such a thing as being absolutely all in; and there is such a thing as going into battle so clean tuckered out that, as soon as it's over—well, here's an instance.

In the gray dawn of the morning after the fight, a chaplain was walking over the scene of the encounter on a hunt for anyone, friend or foe, who might need help.

Loud snores attracted him. Sneaking cautiously in the direction of the sound—for even a Hun snores the chaplain came upon a Marine lying in the shallow trench he had dug for himself with his head pillowed on level ground. He was sleeping the sleep of the tired warrior. And he was so soundly asleep that he didn't know, and wouldn't have cared if he had known, that four dead Germans were sprawled helter-skelter across his legs.

Lying side by side at the dressing station, they were telling each other how they got there. Gas, shrapnel, gas and shrapnel, machine gun bullet—every refinement of war was represented in their disabilities.

Only a prone Artilleryman did not join in the exchange of experiences. Someone asked him why.

"Nothing happened to me," he said.

"What are you doing here, then?"

"Stepped into a shell hole and sprained my ankle."

The attack had been made with a dash in the woods, and though it was not yet dawn, the Yanks were getting their breath in their new positions.

From his dugout which a late lamented Heinie had burrowed, one of them spied something which another and less fortunate member of the bunch had regarded as so precious that he had carried it into the attack. It was a banjo, made out of a cigar box.

He crawled forward, crawled over dead men, got his hands on the trophy and retreated with it to his shelter. It was battered and two of the strings had snapped, but in another moment that whole nervous, frazzled group were humming as he played:

"I wanta go back, I wanta go back, I wanta go back to the farm."

High officers of a certain unit are holding forth in a recently evacuated barn. The stalls have been removed and tables improvised. The mangers make ideal racks for maps and documents. The only traces of the previous tenancy are three birds' nests in the rafters.

When the Army moved in, the birds displayed some uneasiness, but this passed in a day or two. Now there are four youngsters in each of the three nests. The three mothers and fathers fly proudly about sallying out through the windows now and then to return with a worm or two.

The food problem has been simplified by the officers, who, on returning form mess, never fail to bring scraps. Every morning now the pa and ma birds serenade the officers with a song which sounds strangely like "I love the cows and chickens—this is the life—this is the life!"

They belonged to a Marine outfit that had been 17 days in the line without taking their clothes off and without much sleep to speak of. On their way to their rest camp, instead of lying down and sleeping for a week or so, the eight of them made a little seven kilometer detour because they knew where a babbling stream took a curve that offered something most temptingly like the old swimming hole back home. And, Lord, how they wanted a bath!

The lieutenant was eyeing some of the new replacements.

"They're the right stuff," he said "I caught some of them rubbing dust into their gas masks and rolling in the dirt to muss up their uniforms a bit. They have come up here into the jaws of death and the only thing they're afraid of is that some one will call them rookies."

The most valuable commodity at the front is matches. There comes a time when the last drop of gasoline or the last inch of tape is gone from the patent lighters, and the conservative fellows known to have matches can be counted on the fingers of one hand. These become the most popular men in the command.

There is a case on record of one regiment which went three weeks on 12 boxes of matches. When these were gone some bold soldier discovered a way of knocking the ball out of a cartridge, pouring out the powder and igniting it. This lasted until some of the officers began to wonder where their ammunition was going.

Then someone found that a tent rope, ignited at one end, would smoulder for hours. This worked until the supply sergeants found out about it.

Finally, a set of watches was arranged, and men were appointed whose duty it was to keep a light going for a certain number of hours. Everybody in the regiment is smoking without difficulty now, though there has been only that one carefully nourished light for a week.

This isn't a true story, but it's a favorite with the wags up front.

A German prisoner was being questioned, and the quiz finally led around to the whys and wherefores of the war. He was asked if he realized the great cause for which the Allies were fighting.

"Certainly," he said. "The Italians are fighting to whip the Austrians: the French are fighting for their country: the British are fighting for the seas: and the Americans are fighting for souvenirs.

Following a night skirmish, a Yank appeared at a field dressing station.

"Got a bullet in the leg," he declared.

"Where?" asked the doctor.

"That's the funny thing about it," said the soldier. "I didn't feel it, and I can't find it, and I walked all the way here, but my leg is all blood from the hip down."

"Come into the light," commanded doctor.

Investigation disclosed a punctured and empty—canteen. The water had seeped down the soldier's breeches, and he had decided that it was blood.

A battery of French seventy-fives, pressed to its maximum, can put over an astonishing number of shells. On one occasion such a battery, manned by Americans, fired steadily into a German position for half an hour. When it subsided the infantry advanced and captured a German officer and four soldiers, all that were left of the German force.

The German officer was questioned by an intelligence officer. At the conclusion, he said:

"If it isn't asking too much, before you take me back, I'd like to see that three-inch machine gun you fellows have got."

He was writing home.

"You ask me," he said, "to tell you what kind of a noise a shell makes as it comes through the air. Many have tried to describe it and couldn't. But if you really want to know, the noise a shell makes is exactly like either of two things. One is the noise of the shell that came along just ahead of it, and the other is the noise of the shell that comes along just after it."

When the civil population left Xville, it took along with it everything it could. But it could not take its potted geraniums. The potted geraniums, however, still bloom in the red ardor of June. The Yanks see to that. Even dignified and not-to-be-trifled-with M.P.'s have been surreptitiously caught watering them.

They were loading up an ambulance for the long ride back from the field hospital. The patients were being classified into the customary groups of litter and sitting-down cases.

"How about you?" they asked a doughboy who had some shrapnel in his hip. "Can you walk?"

"Sure," he answered. "How far is it?"

"About 40 kilometers."

He scratched his head as though he hated to be shown up. So they explained that they expected him to walk only as far as the ambulance.

The Y.M.C.A. man in the field frequently is the banker for his unit. One was standing alone at the side of a road five or six kilometers behind the lines. All his pockets were obviously overtaxed, and his coat was bulging so that only the lowermost and topmost buttons could connect with their corresponding buttonholes.

"It's money," he explained. "Money and watches. I've got 17 watches and 20,000 francs. The boys got paid before they went in and most of them turned it over to me. I was going up with the battalion, but they asked me to stay behind and watch their valuables."

Y.M. men also keep an emergency fund for change. There is only one thing that a soldier needs change for 10 miles from the nearest store.

"Lemme have 20 francs in silver, please," requests one private.

"Can you give a 10 franc note for this chicken feed?" asks another.

"Sure," says the Y.M. man. "How's the buck running?"

"Tough, ain't it?" he commented, as they lifted him into the ambulance.

"Oh, you're all right," said the corps man cheerfully. "Just a couple of hunks of shrapnel in a couple of places where a couple of hunks of shrapnel can't do any harm.

"That ain't what's worrying me," explained the doughboy. "But here I am going back to a base hospital wounded, and the only Germans I've seen since I came to France were three prisoners."

They call them the Harrisons. There are six of them — the mother and five children, ranging from ten down to two. They still cling to the little farmhouse where the children were born, even though the Hun tide has swept to within less than four kilometers of their home.

Guns boom about them all day: Boche planes circle overhead and are driven back: everyone around town wears steel Stetsons—everyone but the Harrisons.

It would probably be lonesome for them if the Yanks weren't there. And it would be lonesome for the Yanks if the Harrisons weren't there.

An Air Service major who hasn't yet earned his first service chevron—it isn't his fault—has won two wound stripes to make up for it. He took gas for one and had a Boche bullet hit him in the air for the other. Incidentally, he had enlisted as a private, and to gain the double wings had to have the age limit raised. He is 40 years old, a Spanish war veteran, with a wound brought back from the Philippines as a trophy and a big game hunter.

To an American Engineer sergeant serving with the British belongs the distinction of having been wounded on each of three successive days—within a little more than 24 hours, in fact.

He was pinged one night at 11:58. Shrapnel peppered the ambulance in which he was being carried back and left him another memento.

At last he reached the hospital. Soon after the following midnight the hospital was bombed. The Engineer sergeant became a three-star, three-stripe casualty.

The Huns then gave him up as hopeless. At any rate, they haven't followed him any further.

Except on the night after pay-day, the life of an M.P. in the S.O.S. is pretty soft. When he has directed two newly arrived officers to the mairie, told another where he can get a good beefsteak and explained to a fourth that "*Ici on consulte le Bottin*" does not mean "Here you can confer with a boot-maker," he calls it a day's work.

It is different up front. The M.P. on a shelled cross-road leads no life of Riley. He must be on his toes all the time, for he knows that if he misdirects a passing automobile by so much as a single turning, that car is likely to drive into "Germany" and the A.E.F. be minus a perfectly good colonel or something. He knows, too, that the woods may be full of spies and that it is up to him to make the capture.

He serves four hours on and eight hours off, but there is no rest in the eight hours with the shells whistling overhead and occasionally crashing in on the pig-pen he had picked for his bed and begun to regard as home.

A report that a quite unidentifiable man, garbed as an American lieutenant-colonel, was prowling through the territory south of Belleau Woods the other day, put every M.P. on his mettle and made utterly miserable the life of every bona-fide lieutenant-colonel who ventured to put his nose out of his quarters during the next few days.

In no time the rumor was current throughout the sector that one M.P. had tracked the villian and brought him in, that the villian aforesaid had turned out to be a spy of international fame, and that the lucky captor would be decorated and rewarded with a six months' furlough on Broadway.

Nowhere in the A.E.F. is the sense of rumor so keen as at the front, and few of the senior divisions have not vibrated in response to the crazy report that they were all going to be ordered to America for exhibition purposes.

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